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ABSTRACT

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Subjects interacted once or twice with a confederate whose behavior in each interaction was friendly or unfriendly and either spontaneous or forced. Single interaction subjects formed impressions reflecting the confederate's behavior but not its cause. Subjects having friendly then unfriendly interactions formed impressions reflecting the cause of the unfriendly behavior.

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The Attribution of Friendliness

Problem

E. E. Jones and his colleagues (Jones & Harris, 1967; Jones, Worchel, Goethals, & Grumet, 1971) conducted a series of studies on the attribution of attitudes derived from Jones and Davis (1965) correspondent inference theory. The findings of these studies can be summarized as follows: First, when behavior was internally caused (i.e., freely chosen), an attitude corresponding to the behavior was attributed to the actor regardless of whether that behavior was expected or unexpected. Second, when the behavior was externally caused but was expected, subjects still confidently attributed a corresponding attitude to the person. The attribution was as strong, or stronger, in the case of externally caused expected behavior as in the case of internally caused expected behavior. For example, when actors were expected to have anti-Castro attitudes such attitudes were attributed to them on the basis of forced anti-Castro essays as strongly as was the case with freely chosen anti-Castro essays. Third, when an actor was forced to perform unexpected behavior subjects still attributed a disposition corresponding to the behavior. The attributions were less extreme and more variable than when the unexpected behavior was freely chosen, yet the inferences were unmistakably correspondent.

The present study is concerned with attributions of friendliness that develop in face-to-face interpersonal interaction. It set out first to see whether attributions based on a single

interaction with another person would be similar in form to those found in the attitude attribution studies. Four conditions were created which involved the subject and a confederate in a single interaction. The confederate's behavior was either friendly or unfriendly and her behavior was made to appear forced or freely chosen. It was assumed that in the interaction setting used in the experiment the normative expectancy would be for another person to behave in a friendly rather than unfriendly manner. Generalizing from the Jones et al. results, the following predictions were made: First, when the confederate behaves in a friendly manner a disposition of friendliness and warmth will be attributed and this will hold regardless of whether the friendliness is seen as being forced or freely elicited. Second, when the confederate behaves in an unfriendly manner subjects will make a strong attribution of unfriendliness if the behavior is internally caused but a weak attribution if the behavior is externally caused. Assuming, again, that friendliness is normative, these predictions parallel exactly the findings from the attribution of attitude studies.

In addition to trying to conceptually replicate the attribution pattern found in the attribution of attitude studies, the present study was also concerned with impressions that evolve when the subject is able to interact with the confederate twice rather than just once. Four conditions were run where the confederate's behavior was inconsistent, that is, friendly first and then unfriendly in the second interaction. Two general effects were predicted.

These effects were predicted from the general assumption that subjects will have to give careful thought to behavior that is inconsistent over time and will pay close attention to its loci of causality. First, the confederate should be seen as more friendly when the initial friendly behavior is internally rather than externally caused. Second, the confederate should be seen as more friendly when the second (unfriendly) behavior is externally rather than internally caused. Thus the free friendly-forced unfriendly condition will have the highest ratings of friendliness of the four conditions while the forced friendly-free unfriendly condition should obtain the lowest ratings of friendliness. We expect that the forced friendly-forced unfriendly condition will receive relatively high ratings of friendliness based on subjects' normative expectation of friendliness. Finally, we expect that subjects will rate the confederate quite negatively in the free friendly-free unfriendly condition where they might feel somewhat betrayed.

Subjects. The subjects were fifty-four male and fifty female unpaid freshmen and sophomores at Williams College selected from a telephone book.

Procedure. One hundred four subjects participated in an experiment allegedly dealing with "consulting," "a new psychotherapeutic approach." Subjects had either one or two discussions of a case history with a female confederate, described as a clinical psychology graduate student who was practicing various consulting techniques. In each discussion the behavior of the confederate was either consistently friendly and supportive or consistently

aloof and critical. Before each discussion the subjects were given information about the specific technique that the "graduate student" would be using. They were told either that she would be as spontaneous as possible, that she would practice behaving in a friendly and supportive manner, or that she had been assigned to behave in a critical, even hostile, manner. Subjects were asked to formulate impressions of the confederate after interacting with her. Subjects in the double interaction conditions indicated their impressions of the confederate only after both discussions were completed.

Results

For the purposes of the manipulation checks, only the data from the single interaction conditions were considered. The check on the behavior manipulation was the item asking the subjects to rate the behavior of the confederate along a friendly-unfriendly dimension. An analysis of variance of these data indicated a strong main effect for the friendliness variable ($F = 123.66$, $p < .001$).

The check on the free vs. forced or causality manipulation was an item asking the subjects to rate the behavior of the confederate along a spontaneous vs. role playing dimension. An analysis of variance revealed the expected main effect for causality ($F = 13.13$, $p < .001$). In other words, both manipulations were successful.

The means for the friendly-unfriendly and likable-unlikable ratings of personality are presented in Table 1. Within the single interaction conditions, there were noticeable differences between

the high scores for the two friendly behavior conditions and the low scores for the two unfriendly behavior conditions. As predicted, there were no significant differences between the forced and free friendly conditions. Contrary to prediction, however, the confederate was rated equally negatively in the forced unfriendly and free unfriendly conditions. While we did predict some behavior engulfing the field, the extremely unfriendly ratings in the forced unfriendly condition indicate a total disregard of the apparently perceived situational constraints on the "graduate student's" behavior.

The predictions for the four inconsistent (friendly then unfriendly) behavior conditions were generally confirmed by the results. The confederate was, as predicted, rated most friendly and likable in the free friendly-forced unfriendly condition, followed closely by the forced friendly-forced unfriendly condition. Noticeably less positive ratings were obtained in the forced friendly-free unfriendly and free friendly-free unfriendly conditions. A Newman-Keuls analysis shows that the ratings in the two former conditions are higher than the ratings in the two latter conditions (cf. Table 1).

Implications and Conclusions

In light of the normative expectancy for friendly behavior, and also, perhaps, a wish to interpret others' behavior toward us in the most positive way possible, the strong example of behavior engulfing the field seen in the forced unfriendly condition is remarkable. Again, although the causality manipulation was clearly successful subjects attributed an extremely unfriendly disposition

to the confederate in this condition.

It may be that an important factor in explaining these attributions is Jones and Davis' (1965) idea of "hedonic relevance." In the present experiment, the friendly or unfriendly behavior of the confederate determines the respective positive or negative outcomes the subject experiences during the discussion of a case. Under these conditions of high hedonic relevance the subject may, according to correspondent inference theory, be especially likely to perceive the confederate's behavior as dispositional.

Subjects in the conditions where the confederate is first friendly and then unfriendly are highly attentive to whether the second interaction is internally or externally caused. If that interaction is forced, subjects make a moderately friendly attribution regardless of the causality of the friendly behavior. If the unfriendly interaction is freely chosen, subjects make much more negative attributions, again, ignoring to some extent the causality of the prior friendly behavior. There is evidence from the likability measure that subjects find particularly unpleasant the confederate who was apparently genuinely friendly at first but then turned aloof and critical in the second interaction for no apparent external reason. The ratings of the confederate are consistently the lowest in this free friendly-free unfriendly condition although it is only on the likability measure that they appear to be substantially lower.

The contrast between the apparent lack of attention to causality in the single interaction conditions and the sensitivity to it in some of the double interaction conditions suggests that

people can be somewhat lazy in the way they form impressions of personality but if they are presented with a puzzling data pattern, such as the situation in the present study where a person behaves in a friendly way in one instance and in an unfriendly way on a subsequent occasion, they will think harder about underlying dispositions and what is really going on. Then they are likely to consider causality and the role of situational factors in generating the observed behavior.

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Table 1

Single Interaction Conditions	Friendly vs. Unfriendly	Likable vs. Unlikable
Free Friendly	6.66_{a}	6.77_{a}
Forced Friendly	6.22_{ab}	6.55_{a}
Free Unfriendly	3.13_{de}	3.25_{c}
Forced Unfriendly	3.00_{e}	3.50_{c}
Double Interaction Conditions		
Free Friendly-Free Unfriendly	3.77_{de}	3.55_{c}
Free Friendly-Forced Unfriendly	5.44_{bc}	5.22_{b}
Forced Friendly-Free Unfriendly	4.00_{d}	4.66_{b}
Forced Friendly-Forced Unfriendly	5.00_{c}	5.22_{b}

Scores recorded on 7-point scales; the higher the score, the more positive the rating. Entries which do not share a common subscript differ at the .05 level of significance by a Newman-Keuls analysis.